NATION

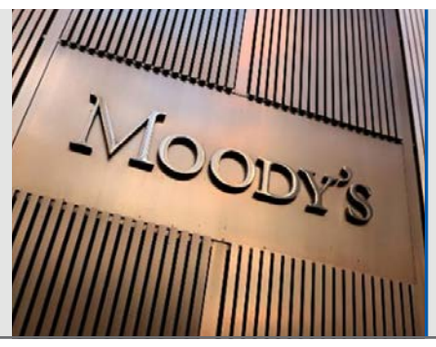
Slugfest over Hema report in Kerala

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Indian cos to spend $45-50B in capex over 1-2 years: Moody's

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

Women's T20 WC shifted from Bangladesh to UAE

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 21 AUGUST 2024 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 15 SAFAR, 1446 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 209 | Pages: 8

WE ARE HIRING

REPORTERS
WEB-EDITOR
SUB-EDITOR

Journalism degree preferred but not essential.

Reporter: 5-6 years experience.

Web-editor: 2-4 years experience.

Sub editors freshers welcome.

SEND YOUR CV TO:

hr.salarnews@gmail.com
anushreeirwin@gmail.com

SC raps WB govt, cops over lapses in rape probe

Task force to frame safety rules, CBI to file report this week

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Amid spiralling nation-wide protests over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a 10-member National Task Force (NTF) to formulate a protocol for ensuring the safety and security of doctors and other health care professionals.

Terming the incident as "horrific", the apex court excoriated the state government over the delay in filing the FIR and allowing thousands of miscreants to vandalise the state-run facility.

It also asked the West Bengal government to not unleash the "power of the State" on peaceful protesters and to deal with them with "great sensitivity in this moment of national catharsis".

The 10-member task force headed by Vice Admiral Arti Sarin has been asked to submit its interim report within three weeks.

Supreme Court, which directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to submit a status report on the progress made in its investigation into the killing, also asked the state government to submit a report on the action it has taken against the vandals.

Taking a serious note of mob violence in the hospital and the allegation that the Kolkata police fled the scene, the top court ordered deployment of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at the hospital to enable doctors to resume work. "In the aftermath of the brutal incident and the demonstrations which followed, the State Government was expected to ensure the deployment of the state machinery to prevent a breach of law and order. We are unable to comprehend how the State was not prepared to deal with the incident of vandalisation of the premises of the hospital," the top court said. The bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud criticised the ex-principal of RG Kar Medical College Dr Sandip Ghosh for trying to pass off the case as that of suicide and not letting the parents of the deceased to see her body for several hours. "After the principal resigned, he is sent to another hospital. When his conduct was under scrutiny, how was he appointed to another college immediately," the bench observed. "We are deeply concerned that there is a absence of safe work conditions across the country, particularly in public hospitals. Most of the young doctors work for 36 hours. We must evolve a national consensus that there must be a national standard protocol so that safe work conditions are provided," the bench said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Resident doctors protest demanding hike in stipend, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

> **What was the principal doing? FIR was not filed; [the] body was handed late to parents; what is the police doing? A serious offence has taken place, the crime scene has taken place in hospital...what are they doing? allowing vandalists to enter the hospital** -Supreme Court

What SC said

- SC says the country cannot wait for a rape for real changes to take place.
- SC orders removal of the name, photos and videos of the doctor.
- SC says If women are not able to go to work and conditions are not safe, we are denying them equality
- SC asks when the conduct of principal was under scrutiny, how was he appointed to another college immediately

SC points lack of facilities in hospitals

- Secure resting zones for male and females
- CCTV cameras in all entry and exit points
- Better security measures in areas where there is potential violence against doctors
- Transport facilities between 10pm & 6am

AMID POLITICAL ROW

UPSC drops latest lateral-entry recruitment drive

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

UPSC on Tuesday cancelled its latest advertisement to fill key posts in government departments through lateral entry, amid a political row over the lack of a reservation provision for those positions.

The move came after Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh wrote to Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Chairperson Preeti Sudan to cancel the advertisement, so that marginalised communities get their rightful representation in government services.

The commission had, on 17 August, issued a notification for the recruitment of 45 posts -- 10 of joint secretaries and 35 of directors or deputy secretaries -- through lateral entry, which is referred to as the appointment of specialists (including those from the private sector) in government departments. It was one of the biggest tranches of lateral recruitment announced by the commission.

The decision had ignited criticism from the opposition parties, which claimed that it undermined the reservation rights of the Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

PHOTO: PTI

Union Minister Chirag Paswan, the head of BJP ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), had also said the proposed recruitment was a "matter of concern" for him and that he would take up the matter with the Centre.

Official sources said the decision to cancel the advertisement was taken by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the government would now review the lateral-entry recruitment drive with reference to the applicability of reservation provisions in it.

At present, the sources said, there is no policy and provision for reservation for these specialised or single-cadre posts. *—PTI*

Israel agrees to ceasefire, now up to Hamas: Blinken

WASHINGTON, 20 AUG

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says that Israel has accepted a proposal to bridge differences holding up a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza. He called on Hamas to do the same. Blinken on Tuesday was on his ninth urgent mission to the Middle East since the war in Gaza began more than 10 months ago. He did not say whether the "bridging proposal" addressed concerns cited by Hamas. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Microplastics found in organs of Antarctica penguins

PANAJI, 20 AUG

Research by scientists from different organisations including the CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography here has confirmed the presence of microplastics in the gastrointestinal tracts of Adelie Penguin in Antarctica, hinting at the "impending emergence of microplastic hotspots" in Antarctic ecosystems. Adelie penguins, it is believed, either ingest microplastic fibers inadvertently, or ingest them indirectly through their prey species. *—PTI*

Jet goes missing after take off from Jamshedpur

JAMSHEDPUR, 20 AUG

A two-seater trainer aircraft went missing after it took off from an aerodrome in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district on Tuesday, following which a massive search was started to locate it, officials said. The aircraft took off from the Sonari aerodrome in Jamshedpur around 11 am, they said. The aircraft was last located near Nimdih in Seraikela-Kharsawan district. *—PTI*

India to integrate UPI with Malaysia's PayNet

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

India plans to integrate its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Malaysia's PayNet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on August 20 following a bilateral meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in New Delhi. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

MANUFACTURING UNIT PLANNED

K'taka to get ₹200cr from Taiwan firm, 5,000 jobs expected

Minister MB Patil with Taiwan-based Bestec Group's officials in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO: X/@MBPATIL*

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Taiwan-based Bestec Group has expressed interest in establishing a manufacturing unit near Bengaluru, at an outlay of Rs 200 crore that could generate 5,000 jobs, Karnataka Minister MB Patil said on Tuesday.

Patil, who holds the Medium and Large Industries portfolio, held a meeting with Bestec Group Chairman Mike Chen and Vice Chairman Teresa Dong on Tuesday.

The Minister said in a statement that he assured full support of the state government to facilitate the company's plans.

"The project is expected to create 5,000 jobs over the next three years as the company gradually invests in the unit," it read.

Bestec, known for producing high-quality adapters, C-pins, EV and laptop chargers, and cables, aims to achieve an annual turnover of Rs 2,500 crore through this planned facility, it added. *—PTI*

MIZORAM FARMERS LOSE ₹800CR DUE TO AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

AIZAWL, 20 AUG

The pig farmers of Mizoram suffered a loss of nearly Rs 800 crore following the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the state since 2021, the Assembly was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister C Lalsawivunga said that 57,217 pigs died of ASF and 43,159 others were culled to prevent the spread of the disease between March 2021, and 15 August, 2024.

Pig farmers of the northeastern state incurred financial loss to the tune of Rs 799.68 crore during that period, he said. He said that 9,866 pigs have died and 17,977 others culled causing a loss of Rs 239.45 crore due to ASF between January to 15 August this year. *—PTI*

Disney-Reliance merger will harm competition: CCI

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday issued a preliminary determination that the proposed USD 8.5 billion merger between Reliance and Walt Disney's media assets in India can impact competition.

In a significant setback to the deal, the CCI has privately notified Disney and Reliance of its concerns, requesting that the companies provide reasons why an investigation should not be launched.

The merger is expected to create India's largest entertainment player, competing with giants like Sony, Zee Entertainment, Netflix, and Amazon. The combined entity would oversee 120 television channels and two streaming services, making it a formidable force in the industry.

The merged entity would possess broadcasting rights for cricket matches, potentially granting it significant influence over pricing and advertising. Neither, Reliance, Disney, nor the CCI has commented on the matter. The companies have been given a 30-day time period to respond and address the concerns. Financial service company, Jefferies, have projected that the Disney-Reliance joint venture could capture 40% of the advertising market in both television and streaming. KK Sharma, expressed concern that the merger could lead to "absolute control over cricket," hinting at the combined entity's dominance in sports broadcasting. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

People block tracks to protest the sexual abuseof two girls, at Badlapur rly station, in Thane on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

3 cops suspended over Badlapur sexual abuse

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of three police officials, including a senior police inspector, for alleged dereliction of duty in probing the sexual abuse of two girls at a school in Badlapur amid massive protests.

Meanwhile, the rail roko protest at Badlapur station in Maharashtra's Thane district on Tuesday over the alleged sexual abuse of two girl students of a kindergarten led to the diversion of 12 long-distance trains via alternate routes, while authorities arranged buses for stranded commuters. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday said an inquiry led by a woman IPS officer has been ordered into the incident. *—PTI*

- Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said an inquiry led by a woman IPS officer has been ordered.

>>>More on Page 4

GOVT DEFENDS CM

'Biren's fake audio meant to derail peace'

IMPHAL, 20 AUG

The Manipur government said a "doctored audio clip" of Chief Minister N Biren Singh is being circulated on social media platforms to incite communal violence and derail the peace process in the State.

A press release issued by Manipur government's Directorate of Information and Public Relations on Monday night appealed to general public to not rely on such unfounded contents circulating in social media and news reports and also to refrain from involvement in spreading such false and fabricated information through any media.

It warned that people shall be prosecuted under relevant provisions of laws if found involved in spreading such unfounded and baseless content or posting and sharing of such content.

The release said the Manipur government views acts of "misinformation and disinformation through doctored clips as anti-national activities" for inciting hatred and mistrust and to derail the peace process started by state and central governments at multiple levels.

It claimed that the "law and order situation has improved in the last 3 to 4 months with relentless efforts of state and central governments with no large scale confrontation except for some low scale sporadic incidents."

N Biren Singh *PHOTO: PTI*

- It claimed that the "law and order situation has improved in the last 3 to 4 months with relentless efforts of state and central governments with no large scale confrontation except for some low scale sporadic incidents."

It claimed that the "law and order situation has improved in the last 3 to 4 months with relentless efforts of state and central governments with no large scale confrontation except for some low scale sporadic incidents."

The statement said that "incidents of shelling of rockets and bombs in fringe areas like Kangvai, areas bordering Bishnupur, Imphal East, Jiribam and Moreh have been reported from time to time and state police and security agencies have taken steps to book the culprits and deter them. Many FIRs have been registered and investigations are going on through agencies like NIA. Security agencies have been able to control such incidents to a great extent." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Cops arrest 7 thieves, recover 78 mobile phones

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Bengaluru City Police have arrested seven people involved in mobile theft, recovering a total of 78 stolen mobile phones valued at Rs 50 lakh. The arrests took place in Vaniyaranapura, Bellandur, Whitefield, and Peenya, among others. In Bellandur division, police acted on a tip-off about a suspect selling mobile phones at unusually low prices. During interrogation, it was revealed that the suspect had been targeting delivery personnel who were responsible for collecting the cancelled mobile phone orders. He would track down these delivery agents, steal the mobile phones and sell them at a cheaper price. In a similar case, Peenya police arrested one individual and seized 23 mobile phones valued at Rs 23 lakh. This suspect had five prior cases registered against him, making him a repeat offender, Bengaluru City Police Commissioner B Dayananda said. Additionally, Whitefield police arrested three people involved in mobile thefts, recovering five stolen phones. Vidyaranyapura police arrested two individuals and seized six mobile.

—Salar News

Police book traffic violators near City schools

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

The East Division Traffic Police Station carried out a special drive on Monday to curb traffic violations near schools and colleges in the area. The operation yielded significant results, with over 520 cases registered and fines amounting to Rs. 2.69 lakh collected from offenders. The most common violations included driving on the wrong side of one-way roads (151 cases), riding two-wheelers without headlights (256 cases), using mobile phones while driving (15 cases), and having faulty registration plates on two-wheelers (101 cases).

—Salar News

Guv can't pick & choose, be selective: CM

CM says BJP is levelling allegations against him as he was always pro-poor, pro-Dalit

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot should function like a representative of President of India and not Central government.

"Governor is a constitutional post and we respect it. Governor should not "pick and choose" and be selective in the matter of granting sanction for prosecution, he said.

Gehlot on 16 August granted sanction permitting investigation against Siddaramaiah under 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act and prosecution under Section 218 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, in connection with Mysuru Urban Development Authority site allotment 'scam'.

The Chief Minister recalled that Karnataka Lokayukta had sought Governor's approval to prosecute Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy on 23 November, 2023 in connection with Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals case but till now no permission has been granted.

Siddaramaiah said the Governor did not give permission to the Lokayukta to prosecute former BJP ministers Shashikala Jolle, Murugesh Nirani and G Janardhana Reddy. "On the other hand, TJ Abraham lodged a (private) complaint against me with the Governor on 26 July at 11am and 10 hours later I was served a show-cause notice. Isn't it discrimination?" Siddaramaiah said. Siddaramaiah accused BJP of levelling baseless allegations against him as he was always pro-poor, pro-Dalit and for social justice. Speaking at a programme to pay tributes to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and former chief minister late Devaraj Urs on their birth anniversary, Siddaramaiah alleged that it was "impossible for the BJP to be with poor, backward classes, Dalits and minorities."

—PTI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah pays tribute to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary, at KPCC office in Bengaluru on Tuesday

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Siddaramiah will continue as CM: DKS

A day after High Court asked the trial court not to take any precipitative action against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah based on the Governor's sanction in the MUDA 'scam', Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivkumar said Siddaramaiah will continue as the Chief Minister. Responding to BJP's demand for a case under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act for allegedly insulting the a "Dalit Governor", he said, "The criticism is not based on caste but on constitutional principles. Tell them to come and get admitted to the new hospital, which has come up newly in Kalaburagi,"

Cong leader accuses PM, Shah of destabilising govt

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva on Tuesday charged the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with trying to destabilise the party government in Karnataka "using" the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot.

"The Gujarat Duo are at their game again, not having learnt their lesson even after the people of India voted to curtail their power," Alva, a former governor, said, without mentioning their names.

Alva added: "Determined to destabilise opposition governments they have now set their eyes on Karnataka and its Backward Class, popular Chief Minister using their 'Sevak' in Rajbhavan to play their game."

She recalled that the Morarji Desai government dismissed the Devaraj Urs government in Karnataka in 1978 and dissolved the Assembly through the "Governor's game." "But the same Governor had to swear him back again after the elections."

—PTI

BJP hits out at Cong for targeting 'Dalit Guv'

BJP MP Lahar Singh Siroya on Tuesday hit out at Congress for targeting Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for granting sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on corruption charges. "Revenue Minister (Krishna Byre Gowda) called the Governor from a Dalit family 'Nalayak'. Another Congress MLC (Ivan D'Souza) has said he will barge into Raj Bhavan and give the 'Bangladesh treatment' to the Governor," he said.

BBMP ON DENGUE ALERT

In a move to curb the rise of dengue cases, BBMP initiated fumigation at Bengaluru's Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

TWIST IN STORY

Rape survivor booked for crashing car into 2 autos

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

The Adugodi traffic police have booked a rape survivor for negligent driving. The woman, who was allegedly sexually assaulted by a choreographer, is accused of crashing her car into two parked autorickshaws and fleeing the scene before the incident.

The incident occurred around 11.45pm near Mangala Junction when the woman, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, was returning home with a friend from a pub. According to the autorickshaw drivers' complaint, the woman took a U-turn and crashed into their vehicles, before fleeing the scene with her friend.

Speaking to Salar News, Adugudi traffic police inspector Ashok Kumar said, "The complaint was registered on the same day by the autorickshaw driver for rash and negligent driving. Currently, we will put the case on hold."

The auto driver chased the car near Forum Mall junction and questioned them about the accident, but the woman and her friend abandoned the car and escaped, the police said.

The woman later sought a ride with a choreographer, Mukeshwaran, who assaulted her sexually. She managed to raise an alarm, forcing the accused to flee. Mukeshwaran was arrested by the police on Monday.

The traffic police have booked the woman under sections related to rash driving and failing to provide information to the police.

—Salar News

The incident occurred around 11.45pm near Mangala Junction PHOTO: PTI

Bouncer arrested for road rage in City

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

A 26-year-old pub bouncer, Naveen Reddy, was arrested by the Bellandur police on Monday night for allegedly creating a ruckus and damaging a car in a road rage incident on Sarjapur Main Road. The incident involved a software engineer, Soumyashankar, his wife, and their nine-month-old child.

According to police reports, Soumyashankar was returning home from a weekend trip when he was suddenly forced to brake due to a pothole. The scooter behind him, driven by Reddy, collided with the vehicle. A heated argument ensued, with Reddy accusing Soumyashankar of reckless driving and demanding he step out of the car. Despite the victim's pleas that a baby was in the car, Reddy allegedly smashed the car's windshield with a wiper blade and a stone. A video recording of the incident captures the ordeal as the accused hurled abuses against the couple.

- According to reports, Soumyashankar was returning home from a weekend trip when he was suddenly forced to brake due to a pothole. The scooter behind him, driven by Reddy, collided with the vehicle. A heated argument ensued, with Reddy accusing Soumyashankar of reckless driving.

Alarmed by the situation, passersby intervened and alerted the police. The Bellandur police arrived at the scene and arrested Reddy. The accused, a resident of Bellandur, was reportedly returning home from work. A case has been registered against him under Sections 126, 324, 351, and 352 of the BNS.

The police suspect that Reddy was under the influence of alcohol. The victim recorded the entire episode, and the footage was used as evidence. Reddy was sent to police custody. *—Salar News*

The victim recorded the entire episode, and the footage was used as evidence PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

'City's decentralisation will hit Kannadigas'

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Kannada Development Authority (KDA) has raised concerns over the proposed decentralisation of Bengaluru as it could lead to the marginalization of Kannadigas in their own land.

Though the decentralisation might be beneficial from an administrative standpoint, it poses a significant threat to the cultural and linguistic identity of Kannadigas, said Purushottama Bilimale, Chairman of KDA, at a training camp on learning Kannada for non-Kannadiga teachers at Vikas Soudha on Tuesday.

"Bengaluru is home to a large number of non-Kannada speakers. If decentralisation proceeds without adequate safeguards, there is a real risk that Kannadigas could become refugees in their own State," Bilimale told **Salar News**.

- KDA has urged the government to consider legislative measures that would ensure adequate representation.

Bilimale also highlighted that the City's cosmopolitan nature, along with the increasing presence of multinational companies has led to a situation where Kannadigas are struggling to find representation and employment. "In many slums, locals are homeless, and if the decentralisation leads to a situation where non-Kannadigas dominate the corporation and other civic bodies, the problems will only worsen," Bilimale said. KDA has urged the Karnataka government to consider legislative measures that would ensure adequate representation for Kannadigas in Bengaluru Decentralisation Committee. The authority has also called for the positions of Mayor and Deputy Mayor to be reserved for Kannadigas. Hampa Nagarajaiah, a senior scholar in Kannada and Jainism, who inaugurated the programme, emphasised the need to teach Kannada not only to non-Kannadigas but also to Kannadigas. *—Salar News*

INSTALLATION WORKS

Trains cancelled in Yeshvantpur stn for 15 days

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

Platforms at Yeshvantpur Railway Station will be closed for 15 days to install an air concourse, South Western Railway (SWR) Zone said. Trains have been cancelled or partially cancelled, and some will be diverted or rescheduled during this period. Platforms 2 and 3 will be closed from 21 August to 4 September, 2024, while platforms 4 and 5 will be closed from 5 to 19 September, 2024, a statement by SWR Zone said. An air concourse is a steel structure that connects all passenger platforms and the terminal buildings. *—PTI*

TRAIN CANCELLATIONS

- 06576 Tumakuru-KSR Bengaluru Express and 06575 KSR Bengaluru-Tumakuru Express are cancelled from 21 to 31 August and 1 to 19 September.
- 12735 Secunderabad- Yeshvantpur Express and 12736 Yeshvantpur -Secunderabad Express are cancelled on 21, 23, 25, 28, 30 August and 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18 September.
- 12257 Yeshvantpur-Kochuveli Express and 12258 Kochuveli- Yeshvantpur Express are cancelled on 20, 22, 25, 27, 29 August and 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17 September.

PARTIAL CANCELLATIONS FROM 21 TO 31 AUGUST AND 1 TO 19 SEPTEMBER

- 06574 Tumakuru- Yeshvantpur Express and 06580 Tumakuru-Yeshvantpur Express are partially cancelled between Chikkabanavara and Yeshvantpur.
- 06591 Yeshvantpur-Hosur Express and 06592 Hosur- Yeshvantpur Express are partially cancelled between Yeshvantpur and Hebbal.
- 06593 Yeshvantpur-Chikkaballapur Express and 06594 Chikkaballapur- Yeshvantpur Express are partially cancelled between Yeshvantpur and Yelahanka.
- 6239 Chikkamagaluru- Yeshvantpur Express and 16240 Yeshvantpur -Chikkamagaluru Express will not operate between Chikkabanavara and Yeshvantpur.
- 16208 Mysuru-Yeshvantpur Express and 16207 Yeshvantpur-Mysuru Express are partially cancelled between Chikkabanavara and Yesvantpur.

TRAIN DIVERSIONS

Trains will be diverted through alternate routes, bypassing Yeshvantpur station entirely:

- 22697 SSS Hubballi-Dr MGR Chennai Central Express and 22698 Dr MGR Chennai Central-SSS Hubballi Express will run via Hubballi, Arsikere, Chikkabanavara, Lottegollahalli, Banaswadi, SMVT Bengaluru, and Krishnarajapuram on 24, 31 August, and 7, 14 September.
- 06511 Banaswadi-Tumakuru Express Special and 06512 Tumakuru-Banaswadi Express Special will operate via Banaswadi, Chikkabanavara, and Tumakuru from 21 August to 19 September.

RESCHEDULED TRAINS

- 16546 Sindhanur-Yesvantpur Express will be delayed by 90 minutes from 20 August to 18 September.
- 06545 Yesvantpur-Vijaypur Express Special will be rescheduled by 30 minutes from 21 August to 19 September. *—Salar News*

Cops urge State to open more CEN police stations

BENGALURU, 20 AUG

With the rising number of cybercrimes in Bengaluru and across Karnataka, a senior police official has called on the State government to establish more Cybercrime, Economic Offences, and Narcotics (CEN) police stations throughout the state.

"The staff at CEN stations is currently inadequate, and their limited technical knowledge is delaying the resolution of cybercrime cases," the official told Salar News.

In 2020, the State Police registered 11,000 cybercrime cases, but this number nearly doubled to 22,000 by 2023.

Elsewhere in Bengaluru, there is one CEN police station in every district police headquarters. In the Capital City, police jurisdiction is divided into eight zones and 24 sub-divisions. The present seven CEN police stations in Bengaluru cover only select sub-divisions. To manage the increase in workload, each district should have at least four CEN police stations and all the 24 sub-divisions in Bengaluru City should have CEN stations, the police official said.

The official said the police department's information technology division has to provide adequate training to the staff posted at CEN police stations and assign the staff special projects to hone and test their skills at solving cybercrimes. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

- Elsewhere in Bengaluru, there is one CEN police station in every district police headquarters.

One Who Heals, Should Not Bleed
Her Pain, Our Voice
No Safety No Duty
SAVE OUR SAVIOURS
बेटी पढ़ी पर बची नहीं
Dont Colour White Apron Red
SAVE OUR SAVIOURS

Doctors and medical students stage a candlelight protest demanding justice for the postgraduate trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, in Mumbai; Doctors and medical stuents stage a protest against the Kolkata rape-murder case in Hyderabad **PHOTOS: PTI**

Corruption probe against ex-head of RG Kar hospital

He is also booked for disclosing the victim's identity

KOLKATA, 20 AUG

The Kolkata Police on Tuesday began an investigation against RG Kar Medical College and Hospital's former principal Sandip Ghosh for his alleged involvement in "financial irregularities" in the state-run health facility, a senior officer said.

The probe against Ghosh commenced after a four-member SIT was constituted to investigate the alleged financial irregularities at the hospital where the body of a postgraduate trainee doctor was found earlier this month.

The police are likely to summon Ghosh in connection with its investigation, the officer said.

The former principal of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital was also booked for disclosing the identity of the postgraduate trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty at the state-run health facility on 9 August.

"There are allegations that Ghosh was involved in financial irregularities at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. Our officers will soon issue summons to him for questioning," the officer said. *—PTI*

SC overturns HC verdict telling girls to control sexual urges

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday set aside an order of the Calcutta High Court in which it acquitted an accused in a sexual assault case and made "objectionable" observations advising adolescent girls to "control sexual urges".

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said it has passed several directions for the authorities on dealing cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Justice Oka, who pronounced the verdict on behalf of the bench, said directions have also been issued on how the judgements should be written by the courts.

The top court had on December 8 last year criticised the verdict and termed as "highly objectionable and completely unwarranted" some observations made by the high court.

The apex court had taken cognisance of some of the observations made by a division bench of the high court and initiated a writ petition on its own, observing that judges are not expected to "preach" while writing judgements.

The West Bengal government had also challenged the October 18, 2023 verdict of the high court in which these "objectionable observations" were made.

In its judgement, the high court had observed that female adolescents should "control sexual urges" as in the "eyes of the society she is the loser when she gives in to enjoy the sexual pleasure of hardly two minutes". *—PTI*

'TMC's Sukhendu Roy to delete post, state not to take action'

KOLKATA, 20 AUG

Lawyers for TMC MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, whose social media post seeking interrogation of Kolkata police commissioner by the CBI in the RG Kar medical college and hospital alleged rape and murder case, and the state on Tuesday told the Calcutta High court that they have reached a settlement on the issue. Roy's lawyer he has agreed to delete the X-handle message in which he sought custodial interrogation of the police commissioner and ex-principal of the medical college, while the state's counsel said they will not take any action against him in connection with the issue.

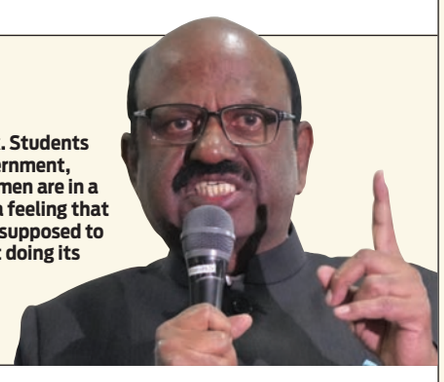
Justice Rajarshi Bharadwaj, said he will pass an order on Wednesday in this regard after Roy deletes message and the state submits a report in this regard staying that it will not take any subsequent action against him. *—PTI*

Supreme Court's observations in the rape and murder have raised serious questions on the 'mindset and morality' of the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal. Centre will leave 'no stone unturned' to ensure justice to the victim.

—West Bengal BJP

Bengal is in a state of flux. Students have lost faith in the government, youths are scared and women are in a state of despair. There is a feeling that the government, which is supposed to protect the citizens, is not doing its role

—CV Ananda Bose, West Bengal Governor



Scuffle erupts between cops, ABVP activists

KOLKATA, 20 AUG

A scuffle broke out between police personnel and ABVP activists during a march to Swasthya Bhavan, the headquarters of the West Bengal health department, in Salt Lake area to protest against the alleged rape and murder of an RG Kar hospital medic.

The protestors demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who also doubles up as the state's Health and Home Minister.

The police had put up barricades at several roads leading to Swasthya Bhavan, which the ABVP activists tried to break through, a senior officer sa. The healthcare services were severely affected at state-run hospitals across West Bengal as the ceasework agitation by junior doctors to protest against the alleged rape and murder entered the 12th day on Tuesday. *—PTI*

Police personnel lathicharge on ABVP activists during their march to Swasthya Bhawan, in Kolkata, on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

CALCUTTA HC ALLOWS BJP'S DEMONSTRATION FOR 5 DAYS

KOLKATA, 20 AUG

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday allowed the West Bengal BJP to stage a demonstration near Shyambazar metro station in the city for five days from August 21 to protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor in RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The state's counsel submitted that the demonstration be allowed for only one day, claiming that a five-day sit-in would affect the convenience of the general public. *—PTI*

Searches for victim's vid on porn sites

Since the rape and murder of the Kolkata doctor was reported, the name of victim has consistently appeared among the top Google searches. While one might assume these searches were driven by a desire to learn more about the case, there is a more troubling aspect to consider. *—Agencies*

16-year-old molested, teacher booked

Hamirpur, 20 Aug

A government school teacher in Hamirpur district was booked after he was accused of molestation by a 16-year-old student, police said on Tuesday. After the matter came to the fore, the family created a ruckus at the school and also allegedly thrashed the teacher. *—PTI*

1 arrested for assault on specially-abled

Thane, 20 Aug

A 42-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly molesting a specially-abled girl on the premises of a civic hospital in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred at the civic hospital in Kalwa on Monday morning, an official said. *—PTI*

CPI(M) leader Yechury's health condition is stable

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The condition of Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Sitaram Yechury, who is undergoing treatment for chest infection at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMMS), New Delhi, is improving, the party on Tuesday said. According to hospital sources, 72-year-old Yechury was admitted in the emergency department of the hospital Monday evening. "Comrade Sitaram Yechury, General Secretary of CPI(M), was admitted to the AIMMS on 19 August evening due to a chest infection. "He is undergoing treatment and his condition is improving," CPI(M) in a statement said on Tuesday. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Cong's Digvijaya Singh tests positive for Covid

BHOPAL, 20 AUG

Veteran Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijaya Singh on Tuesday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. He shared the information on his X handle. "My Covid test has come positive. I have been asked to rest for 5 days. So, I will not be able to meet for some time. Sorry. All of you also take care of yourself to avoid Covid," the Rajya Sabha member said in the post. In the past, he had tested positive for the infection in January 2022. *—PTI*

RS bypolls: BJP fields Ministers Ravneet Bittu, George Kurian

Ravneet Singh; George Kurian **PHOTOS: WIKIPEDIA/ PTI**

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

BJP on Tuesday announced nine candidates for the September 3 Rajya Sabha bypolls, fielding Union ministers Ravneet Singh Bittu from Rajasthan and George Kurian from Madhya Pradesh.

The party fielded former BJD leader Mamata Mohanta from Odisha and ex-Congress leader Kiran Choudhary from Haryana. Both these leaders joined the BJP recently.

According to a list of nine candidates released by the BJP, Manan Kumar Mishra will contest the bypolls from Bihar, Dhairyashil Patil from Maharashtra and Rajib Bhattacharjee from Tripura.

Bhattacharjee is the president of the BJP's Tripura unit.

The ruling party has fielded Mission Ranjan Das and former Union minister Rameswar Teli as its candidates from Assam. *—PTI*

Govt's lateral entry U-turn due to criticism by Oppn, says Cong

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The Congress on Tuesday claimed that the Centre's move to withdraw the advertisement for lateral entry in bureaucracy was due to the campaign by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and INDIA bloc parties, and said this shows that only the power of the Constitution can defeat the "arrogance of a dictatorial regime".

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi asserted that the Congress will protect the Constitution and the reservation system at all costs and foil "conspiracies" of the BJP.

The remarks came after Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh wrote to Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) chairman Preeti Sudan and asked her to cancel the advertisement so that marginalised communities get their rightful representation in government services.

Mallikarjun Kharge **PHOTO: PTI**

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Tuesday claimed that the move was after her party's opposition to the move, stressing that "all such anti-reservation processes" need to be stopped.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the government succumbed to the unity of the 'PDA'.

Lateral entry into bureaucracy is a direct assault on social justice and it deprived opportunities deserved for meritorious and minority officers from the reserved categories, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said on Tuesday.

He called upon the Central government to halt this practice, and instead prioritise filling backlog vacancies for OBCs, SC/STs, and ensure fair and equitable promotions.

"We demand the complete abolition of the creamy layer, a concept we have always opposed," he said on X. *—PTI*

KIRAN CHOUDHRY RESIGNS FROM HARYANA ASSEMBLY

SRINAGAR, 20 AUG

Haryana MLA Kiran Choudhry has resigned from the Vidhan Sabha and is likely to be fielded in the Rajya Sabha bypolls by the BJP, nearly two months after she joined the party after quitting the Congress.

"I have tendered my resignation as Vidhan Sabha member (MLA)," Choudhry told PTI over phone on Tuesday.

Official sources said that her resignation has been accepted by the Assembly Speaker. A former Haryana minister and MLA from Tosham, Choudhry, 69, had joined the BJP along with her daughter Shruti and their supporters in June. BJP is likely to field Choudhry from the Rajya Sabha seat in Haryana. *—PTI*

ON TAX DEMAND

SC grills HC order asking Cong to move ITAT

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The Supreme Court on Monday questioned the Delhi High Court's decision asking the Congress party to approach the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) for a stay on Income Tax demand notice for recovery of outstanding dues of more than Rs 100 crore.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and N Kotiswar Singh, which issued notice on the plea of the Congress against the 13 March High Court order, however, said the ITAT can proceed on the political party's appeal.

"How can the High Court ask the petitioner (Congress) to go back to ITAT when it came in appeal against tribunal's order? The High Court was not right in not exercising its jurisdiction," the bench observed.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman, appearing for the Income Tax department, informed the court that the recovery of the outstanding amount has already been made and the issue in question is of only academic interest now.

Senior advocate Vivek Tankha, appearing for the Congress party, submitted that the High Court should have exercised its jurisdiction and at least granted an interim stay on the demand notice.

"Accordingly, while we find no ground to interfere with the order impugned, we dispose of the writ petition according liberty to the petitioner to approach the ITAT by way of a fresh stay application bringing to its attention the change in circumstances noticed above. An application, if so moved, may be considered by the ITAT with due expedition," the High Court had ordered. *—PTI*

RAGA VISITS RAEBARELI, EVADES KOLKATA QUERIES

RAEBARELI, 20 AUG

Evading queries on the Kolkata doctor rape-and-murder case, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said he would speak on the matter in future as he does not want to be distracted from the issue of the murder of a Dalit youth whose family he met here.

"All people here are demanding justice because a Dalit man has been killed. His entire family has been threatened, one person has been killed but no action is being taken here...," Gandhi told reporters at Bhuvalpur Sisni village. The victim, Arjun Pasi, was shot dead on 11 August allegedly after an altercation with some locals. Six people have been arrested in the case so far, according to police. *—PTI*

AIMIM to join MVA to defeat BJP in Maharashtra

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 20 AUG

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) is keen to join hands with the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance in Maharashtra with an aim to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that is currently ruling the State along with two other parties, former MP Imtiaz Jaleel has said.

Jaleel, who is the AIMIM's State unit president, was talking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha after a meeting of the party in Mumbai.

Replying to a query, he said, "We had said this during the Lok Sabha elections and we are giving an offer to the MVA again to join hands as we want to defeat the BJP. But it is up to them whether to include us in the alliance or not."

"If they (MVA parties) take us along, it will be beneficial for them. If not, we are ready to move ahead alone...If they think we have some power and have a vote bank, then they will ask us, otherwise they will not," Jaleel added.

Imtiaz Jaleel **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

He said, "The BJP has damaged the country, so we want to keep them away from the government by any means."

He, however, refused to forge an alliance with the Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA). *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

2 back-to-back earthquakes strike Baramulla

SRINAGAR, 20 AUG

Two back-to-back earthquakes jolted Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday causing panic across the Valley, but there were no reports of loss of life or damage to property, officials said. The first earthquake of magnitude 4.9 on the Richter Scale struck at 6:45 am at a latitude of 34.17 north and a longitude of 74.16 east at a depth of 5 km with the epicentre in Baramulla district of north Kashmir. They said another quake of magnitude 4.8 occurred at 6:52 am at a latitude of 34.20 north and a longitude of 74.31 east at a depth of 10 km with the epicentre in Baramulla as well. The officials said there are no reports of any loss of life or damage to property. *—PTI*

7 dead as auto rams into truck in MP

CHHATARPUR, 20 AUG

Seven people, including a one-year-old child, were killed and six others injured after an auto-rickshaw rammed into a stationary truck from behind in Chhatarpur of Madhya Pradesh early on Tuesday, officials said. The accident took place under the Civil Line police station limits when the rickshaw was going towards Bageshwar on Khajuraho-Jhansi highway around 5 am, a police official said. "Thirteen people were travelling in the auto-rickshaw and seven of them were killed while six others injured after the vehicle collided with a truck on Jhansi-Khajuraho Road," Superintendent of Police (SP) Agam Jain said. The victims were going from Mahoba (in Uttar Pradesh) to Bageshwar Dham in Chhatarpur, he said. Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Akhil Rathore said that as per the initial information, the CNG-run auto-rickshaw rammed into the stationary truck from behind. *—PTI*

Nursing student found dead with cannula in hand

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

In a suspected case of suicide, a 22-year-old nursing student was found dead with a cannula in her hand at her PG accommodation in east Delhi's New Ashok Nagar area, police said on Tuesday. On Sunday, a PCR call was received that a woman was lying unconscious in her room. A police team reached the spot and found the room locked from inside, a police officer said. The door was broken open and the woman was found lying on her bed with a cannula in her hand and two IV drips hanging from the ceiling fan, the officer said. The woman, a native of Madhya Pradesh, shared the room with two others who had gone home for Raksha Bandhan. *—PTI*

Porsche crash: 2 held for swapping of blood samples

PUNE, 20 AUG

The Pune police have arrested two more people in the alleged swapping of blood samples in the Porsche car crash case, a top official said on Tuesday. With the arrest of the duo Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad late Monday night, the number of people held in the Porsche car crash case has gone up to nine, The high-end car allegedly driven by the minor under the influence of alcohol knocked down two motorbike-borne IT professionals, one of them a woman, in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area in the wee hours of 19 May, killing them. The boy's father is a prominent builder. The boy's parents and doctors - Dr Ajay Taware, then HOD of forensic medicine department, Dr Shrihari Halnor and one Atul Ghatkamble from Sassoon are already arrested *—PTI*

Thane rapes: Protest turns violent

Protesters vandalise school, pelt stones at cops during rail roko

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

The protest against the alleged sexual abuse of two girls at a school in Badlapur of Maharashtra's Thane turned violent on Tuesday as the angry agitators vandalised the school and also indulged in stone-pelting at the local railway station during the 'rail blockade', police said.

Police on 17 August arrested an attendant at the school in Badlapur for allegedly abusing two girl students of the kindergarten, aged three and four years. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school.

The school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher, and a female attendant, over the incident.

Angry parents of the school children and citizens, including many women, gathered outside the school on Tuesday and also held a 'rail roko' protest at the Badlapur railway station, blocking the path of suburban trains from around 8.30 am. They demanded action against the school and strict punishment against the accused involved in the incident. Some of the protesters, including women, later broke the gate of the school and vandalised it by breaking the window panes, benches and doors, police said.

At the railway station, as the protest hampered the movement of trains and caused inconvenience to scores of commuters, police personnel and other authorities tried to convince the protesters to end the agitation, but in vain.

The protest led to the diversion of 10 long-distance trains via alternate routes, the Central Railway said.

Police try to disperse people blocking railway tracks in protest against the alleged sexual assault of two girls at Badlapur railway station *PHOTO: PTI*

Some of the agitators hurled stones during the protest, but the situation was soon brought under control, the police said.

The Maharashtra government ordered the setting up of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the sexual abuse of the two girl students.

The SIT will be headed by Inspector General of Police-rank officer Aarti Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who heads the Home Department, stated on X.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday said he has directed the police that the accused arrested be booked under the attempt to rape charge. He also said that the case will be fast-tracked and a special public prosecutor will be appointed for the case.National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) will dispatch a team to Thane. The apex child rights body has also questioned the delay in the registration of an FIR in the matter.

The incident has sparked outrage, particularly due to a reported delay by the local police in lodging the First Information Report (FIR). *—PTI*

UDAIPUR STABBING VICTIM CREMATED

JAIPUR, 20 AUG

A 15-year-old boy, who was stabbed by a fellow student and died after battling for his life for four days, was cremated in Udaipur on Tuesday amid tight security. A large number of people joined the funeral of Devraj, whose stabbing sparked communal violence in Udaipur. His family agreed to accept the body after they reached an agreement with officials on their demands on Monday, they said. The family has been promised compensation of Rs 51 lakh by the state, a fast-track trial, a contractual job for one member and security, they added. All government and private schools are also closed. Protesting against the incident, members of Hindu outfits had set ablaze some cars at a motor garage and vandalised a shop in a mall. *—PTI*

Slugfest over Hema report in Kerala

T'PURAM, 20 AUG

The shocking revelations of the Justice Hema Committee report on harassment faced by women in the Malayalam cinema industry have evoked strong reactions across society. There are demands of stringent actions to ensure a safe working atmosphere and equal treatment for women professionals.

While the Opposition Congress-led UDF wanted a team of women IPS officers to probe the complaints, the State Women's Commission sought the immediate intervention of the authorities to address the issues pointed out in the report. Welcoming the release of the report, the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), an outfit of women professionals in the , expressed

PHOTO: PIXABAY

hope that the government would take all necessary steps to study and act upon the recommendations. The outfit also said this is the first time in the history of cinema that there is a report on how gender works in the film industry. The Hema Committee was constituted by the State government to study the issues faced by women in the film industry, their working atmosphere, and to suggest solutions to their problems. It was for the first time that a government in this country came up with such an initiative and constituted a committee with a high court judge, a bureaucrat (both retired), and a senior cine artist to make a study on the issues relating to women in cinema and suggest solutions. The much-awaited Hema Committee report, released on Monday, has recorded explosive accounts of harassment, exploitation, and ill-treatment of female professionals in the film industry and has alleged that a "criminal gang" was controlling the industry where unyielding women are squeezed out.

The panel report also alleged there was a "power nexus" consisting of a handful of producers, directors, actors and production controllers.

The women actors who are ready to compromise are given code names, and those who are not ready to yield are pushed out of the field, as per the report. *—PTI*

Report claims

- 10-12 bigshots control hiring of actors via sexual abuse
- Girl actors must have sex to get casted
- The women actors who are ready to compromise are given code names

Kerala orders 'space audit' in med colleges

T'PURAM, 20 AUG

In the wake of protests by healthcare professionals against the rape and murder of a resident doctor at a hospital in Kolkata, the Kerala government has ordered a space audit to ensure safety of the employees in medical colleges in the state. State Health Minister Veena George has directed the Director of Medical Education to carry out the audit, the government said in a statement on Tuesday. The conduct of the space audits has to be ensured at the institution-level by the principals and at the State-level by the DME, it said. The additional measures ordered by the minister to ensure safety in medical colleges in Kerala, include organising mock drills, installing public address systems, CCTVs and alarms, using walkie talkies, intensifying security monitoring and not allowing unauthorised persons to stay inside the hospitals at night, the statement said. Besides these, George also ordered that safety of women employees returning to the hostel after duty at night should be ensured and implementing a plan in collaboration with the district administration to protect the staff and hospital visitors from the attacks. *—PTI*

- The conduct of the space audits has to be ensured at the institution-level by the principals and at the State-level

ISRO to launch 70 satellites in five years, says its chief

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

More than 10 companies and consortia have evinced interest in manufacturing the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), with a few being shortlisted as potential bidders for the transfer of technology, ISRO chairman S Somanath said on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PTI

He said the selected industry partner will first develop two SSLVs with assistance from ISRO over a two year period before venturing out on its own to build rockets to place small satellites in low earth orbits. The company or a consortium identified for transfer of technology for the SSLV can continue to build the rocket at ISRO facilities till it develops its own campus for manufacturing the launch vehicles. Somanath also said that the space agency was planning to launch 70 satellites over the next five years, including a constellation of low earth orbit satellites to meet the requirements of different ministries and departments of the government. *—PTI*

Delhi hospitals, mall get bomb threat

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Several hospitals, including AIIMS and Safdurjung, and a mall in Delhi on Tuesday received bomb threat emails, prompting authorities to launch searches on their premises, officials said. A call was received at 1.04 pm from a hospital in Nangloi and another from Primus Hospital at 1.07 pm in central Delhi's Chanakya Puri informing that they had received bomb threats, a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said. Fire tenders, bomb detection teams and police rushed to the spots. A thorough checking is being conducted, the official said. "We have placed many explosives inside your building. They are placed in black backpacks. The bombs are set to go off in a few hours," the email, sent through Gmail at 12.04 pm, stated. The email claimed that a "group named 'COURT" is behind this massacre". *—PTI*

Security beefed up *PHOTO: PTI*

MONSOON MAYHEM

1

2

3

4

5

1. People help a pedestrian who fell on a flooded road after heavy monsoon rains at ITO in New Delhi on Tuesday
2. A man rides a scooter on a flooded road after heavy monsoon rains in Hyderabad
3. A massive landslide destroyed the power station of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation's (NHPC) Teesta Stage 5 dam in Sikkim
4. A portion of Basai Road caved in after rains in Gurugram
5. NDRF personnel evacuate people from a flood-affected area following rainfall at Baldakhal village on the outskirts of Agartala

PHOTOS: PTI

SEEKS CONTRIBUTIONS

Nations bat for funds on climate

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

As the deadline to agree on a new climate finance goal nears, developed nations are pushing to expand the list of countries responsible for contributing funds to help developing countries address climate change, with Switzerland even proposing criteria to broaden the donor base.

Submissions made by some developed countries to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) regarding negotiations on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), the new climate finance goal to be finalised in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November, suggest that wealthy nations might pressure countries with high emissions and high gross national income (GNI) per capita, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and China, to contribute.

PHOTO: PTI

According to the UNFCCC, adopted in 1992, high-income, industrialised nations are responsible for providing finance and technology to help developing countries combat and adapt to climate change. These countries include the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and European Union (EU) member states such as Germany, France and the UK.

Some developed countries, led by the EU and the US, argue that the global economic landscape has changed significantly since 1992.

They suggest that nations which have become wealthier during this period, like China and some Gulf states, should also contribute to the new climate finance goal.

Developing countries view this as an attempt to shift responsibility from those who have historically benefited from industrialisation and contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions. They argue that expecting them to contribute, especially when many are still struggling with poverty and inadequate infrastructure amid worsening climate impacts, undermines the principle of equity. *—PTI*

India, Malaysia ink pact on recruitment, UPI payments

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

India and Malaysia on Tuesday decided to elevate their ties to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim. The two sides inked a number of pacts, including one on employment and repatriation of workers and another on boosting cooperation in the area of digital technologies. Ibrahim began his three-day visit to India on Monday night. It is his first visit to India as prime minister. The larger focus of the Modi-Ibrahim talks was to expand trade and investment and explore cooperation in new and emerging areas. Modi also described Malaysia as an "important partner" of India in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Indo-Pacific region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim during latter's ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

We agreed that review of the free trade agreement between India and ASEAN should be completed in a timely manner. In an apparent reference to the situation in South China Sea,

Modi said: "We are committed to freedom of navigation, overflight as per international laws and favour resolution of all disputes peacefully."

Malaysia to get UPI system

India plans to integrate its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Malaysia's PayNet, Modi said. Currently, UPI is operational in Bhutan, Singapore, the UAE, France, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, as part of India's strategy to extend its instant payment network worldwide. *—PTI*

FREE PALESTINE!
END U.S. AID TO ISRAEL!
NOT FOR GENOCIDE
MARCH ON THE DNC 2024
STAND WITH PALESTINE! END U.S. AID TO ISRAEL!
Money for Jobs, School, Healthcare, Housing, and Environment. Not for War!
Immigrant Rights and Legalization for All! Justice, Peace, and Equality! Defend the Right to Unionize and Strike!
Stop Police Crimes! Community Control of the Police Now!

STAND WITH PALESTINE

Demanding to end US aid to Israel and stand with Palestine, protesters march to the Democratic National Convention after a rally at Union Park in Chicago on Monday
PHOTO: PTI

South China sea tensions a threat to global trade?

The post-Covid era has been punishing for global trade. Lockdowns and factory closures sparked supply chain delays worldwide and helped fuel decades-high inflation.

The Suez Canal was closed for a week in 2021 after a container ship got stuck. Attacks on shipping by Yemen-based Houthis and Iran over the past 10 months have forced a rerouting of container vessels from the Red Sea via Africa

And now China's military standoffs in the South China Sea could also impact the smooth flow of trade.

China conducted military drills around Taiwan after vowing to retake the island by force, if necessary
PHOTO: CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

How important is the South China Sea for world trade?

Making up part of the western Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea sits between southern China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia.

About a third of global maritime trade passes through the 3.5 million square kilometer (1.4 million square mile) seaway annually, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Around 40% of petroleum products traded globally are delivered via the sea every year. In 2016, an estimated $3.6 trillion (₹3.29 trillion) worth of goods and commodities traveled the seaway, according to the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Another estimate put the figure as high as $5.3 trillion.

Tens of thousands of cargo vessels move through the South China Sea every year, carrying around 40% of China's, a third of India's and 20% of Japan's trade with the rest of the world, according to CSIS data.

Out of all of Asia, the three countries' economic security is most closely tied to the smooth running of the waterway. The South China Sea is a vital crossroads for both intra-Asian trade as well as for commerce with the rest of the world, especially Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

What makes South China Sea a controversial issue?

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea as its own, angering its neighbors who say China's territorial ambitions cut into their exclusive economic zones. China ignored a 2016 ruling by an international arbitration court in The Hague, Netherlands, that Beijing has no legal or historical basis for its expansive claims under international law.

The Chinese military has staged increasingly aggressive actions in the seaway recently, including clashes with Filipino ships, fueling fears of a full-scale conflict. The United States has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines if the Filipino military were to be attacked, including in the South China Sea.

Vietnam filed a claim last month with the United Nations for an extended continental shelf beyond the current 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) in the seaway. The Philippines made a similar move in June.

China also regards Taiwan, which split with the mainland at the end of a civil war 75 years ago, as a renegade province with which it must eventually be reunified. Concerns that Beijing may use military force to bring the democratic island under its control have further raised tensions in the South China Sea.

Why is the South China Sea contested?

The South China Sea is estimated to hold about 5.38 trillion cubic meters (190 trillion cubic feet) of proven and probable natural gas and 11 billion barrels of oil reserves, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

The disputed waters also contain large deposits of rare-earth minerals crucial to China's technological ambitions, including electric vehicle batteries and advanced electronics. Some estimates suggest the Pacific Ocean contains a thousand times more rare-earth minerals than the currently known land reserves, more than half of which are controlled by China and are needed for the transition to cleaner energy.

Could the China and Middle East tensions converge?

Since late last year, global trade has been hurt by attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the Red Sea off Yemen. The Houthis ordered drone and missile strikes on commercial shipping in response to Israel's offensive against Hamas militants in Gaza. The big shipping firms have diverted their vessels from the Red Sea route, which includes the Suez Canal. Instead, cargo ships traverse the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, adding around 10 days to the average journey from Asia to Europe.

The move has spiked shipping costs due to higher insurance and diesel prices, which caused delays at container ports in Europe and Asia..

— DW News

SALAR سالار

Attacks on health centres, staff is a concern: WHO

The violent upheaval tearing Khartoum apart has forced many Sudanese people to flee for safety. The war's impact on the capital's healthcare system has made it even more urgent for many families to leave. said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of World Health Organisation, Attacks on medical facilities in Khartoum in 2023 led to a shortage of drugs throughout the capital, which meant that many chronically ill Sudanese could no longer find the medicines they needed.

This is the reality for millions in vital need of healthcare not just in Sudan but elsewhere in the world as well. In Gaza, multiple attacks on hospitals have killed and injured hundreds, including health workers and displaced people seeking refuge in what were thought to be safe havens. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) city of Goma, doctors and nurses have been murdered while trying to care for displaced people. In Ukraine, the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital was targeted in an air raid, killing one doctor and one hospital worker and injuring 16 people, including seven children. In Pakistan, a bomb killed police officers deployed to protect polio vaccination workers. As the director-general of the WHO, I have repeatedly condemned such attacks and called for the protection and respect of health workers in humanitarian settings and beyond. Yet, my calls, and those of our humanitarian partners in the field and around the world, have gone unheard, despite health facilities, their staff, patients and other civilians being protected under international law during conflicts.

In 2023 alone, WHO recorded 1,520 attacks on healthcare, resulting in the deaths of at least 750 patients and health workers, and 1,250 injuries. So far this year, more than 700 attacks have also taken place. Dire as these numbers are, they likely underestimate the true scale of the problem.

While one attack is too many, some places have experienced alarmingly high numbers of attacks in short periods. In Gaza, more than 500 medical personnel have been killed since the conflict began last October. In addition, at least 287 aid workers have lost their lives, including many colleagues from UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, and at least one member of our WHO family, Dima Alhaj. In Gaza, like in Ukraine, Sudan, the DRC, Haiti and beyond, those who fall leave behind grieving families and communities. Parties to conflicts are failing humanitarian and health workers and the people they serve. Even in responding to clear threats to public health, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ebola outbreak in the DRC, humanitarian and health workers faced fatal attacks, physical threats and psychological intimidation on an unprecedented scale. On 19 August, when we mark World Humanitarian Day, we must confront the intensifying attacks on aid workers and attempts to normalise them. On this day, I reiterate my condemnation of all forms of violence, threats and attacks against humanitarians, including health workers. I also join fellow UN and humanitarian leaders in calling on all countries to take collective responsibility and action to ensure full protection for humanitarian workers. We must provide humanitarian heroes the protected space they need to save lives.

More than ever, World Humanitarian Day reminds us of the essence of our work: protecting everyone, everywhere, at any time, regardless of how difficult the situation is.

Beyond the legal implications, attacks on health interfere with the work of health workers, the distribution of health supplies, and the essential services of health facilities, like vaccinations, prenatal care, and treatment for chronic diseases, leading to preventable deaths and increased suffering. Even a single attack on the only hospital serving a population can have devastating, long-lasting consequences on healthcare delivery for entire communities in the immediate term, and for years to come.

Health facilities provide more than care – in many communities, they offer refuge and contribute to collective welfare. The WHO Constitution states, "The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States."

WHO knows all too well the immense value of our colleagues who work in humanitarian settings, and the pain felt when we lose them needlessly to armed violence.

Their dedication is a testament to the impact humanitarian action can have on millions of lives.

By safeguarding humanitarians, we uphold the principles of compassion and solidarity and reaffirm our commitment to a more humane world.

— Courtesy Al Jazeera

Attacks on medical facilities in Khartoum in 2023 led to a shortage of drugs throughout the capital
PHOTO: WHO

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Harris faces sexism while US voters get ready for 1st female prez

Since President Joe Biden exited the presidential race on 21 July, 2024, and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic presidential nominee, Harris' campaign has generated widespread enthusiasm and attention. She quickly became the official Democratic presidential nominee and erased Donald Trump's lead over Biden in national and swing-state polling.

Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, have also drawn tens of thousands of supporters to their recent rallies in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Arizona and Nevada. Although things could change dramatically over the next two-plus months, there is a real possibility that the United States may finally elect its first female president.

But in polling that we conducted in August 2024, after Harris became the presumptive Democratic nominee, we found that sexism is still a powerful force in American politics.

Hope and change?

Yes, the scars of the 2016 campaign – in which sexism played a key role in Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's defeat by Trump – are still fresh for Democrats. But many hope that America has changed and has become more accepting of women in leadership roles.

Harris' gender, this argument goes, won't be a significant deterrent for voters.

On the surface, our recent nationally representative survey of 1,000 American adults supports this, with 51 per cent of Americans agreeing with the statement: "America is ready for its first African American female president." Only 23 per cent of Americans disagreed.

Even so, some Republicans appear to think they can win by making gender an issue in the campaign. This is apparent in the sexist rhetoric that Trump and other Republicans are using when talking about Harris. Trump, who has a history of making sexist statements, asserted that foreign leaders would regard Harris as a "play toy," referred to her as unintelligent, and is now commenting on her appearance. Both The Associated Press and The New York Times have reported – based on unnamed sources – that Trump has also called Harris a "bitch" in private, although Trump's spokesman denied he used that term.

In a similar sexist vein, Trump allies have attempted to turn Harris' past romantic relationships into campaign issues, with one conservative commentator on Fox Business News crudely labeling Harris the "original hawk tuah girl," an obscene sexual reference.

Trump and other Republicans are using sexist remarks when they are talking about Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris
PHOTO: ANI

Understanding the importance of sexism

We are political scientists who study the role of identity in American politics and who conduct polls that explore Americans' views on gender and the extent to which sexism still pervades the nation.

We conducted two national polls this year – one in January 2024 when Biden was still in the race, and the other in August 2024, after Harris became the presumptive Democratic nominee. For each poll, we surveyed 1,000 American adults 18 and older and asked about their thoughts on the election, their policy views and their attitudes toward various groups in society. With the change at the top of the Democratic ticket, we can better assess the impact of sexism on vote choice in the presidential election by comparing the results from January, when the race featured two male candidates, with August, when Harris entered the race.

To measure sexism, we then asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of three statements that express prejudice, resentment and animus toward women, or what political scientists call "hostile sexism."

The statements in the "hostile sexism" battery are: "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men"; "Women are too easily offended"; and "Women exaggerate problems they have at work." Greater agreement with these statements indicated more sexist views.

Sexism mattered, even when Biden was in the race

Due in part to Trump's sexist rhetoric throughout his campaigns and presidency, sexist attitudes have become closely linked with whom individuals support for president.

On average, more sexist individuals have tended to prefer Republican candidates in recent elections.

Taking into consideration other factors that influence support for Biden – partisanship, ideology, racial attitudes, education, economic views and so forth – we found that those with the least sexist views had an 83 per cent chance of supporting Biden, while those with the most sexist views had a 17 per cent chance of doing so.

With Harris, sexism matters more

If sexism depressed individuals' support for Biden's candidacy, does that mean Harris faces no additional penalty in terms of lost support for her candidacy? Hardly. While sexism mattered in January, it mattered more in August once Harris had taken over the Democratic ticket. In a head-to-head matchup between Harris and Trump, 89% of those in the lowest third on the sexism scale – meaning those who disagreed most with the statements measuring hostile sexism – support Harris compared with 11 per cent for Trump.

On the other hand, only 18 per cent of those scoring highest on sexism support Harris, versus 82 per cent for Trump.

Without sexism

Since Harris seems to be narrowly leading Trump in the polls, why should we care about the influence of hostile sexism in the election? To answer this question, imagine a world in which hostile sexism doesn't influence attitudes toward presidential candidates who are women. Our findings imply that, in such a world, Harris' lead over Trump might be larger. Put simply, hostile sexism is helping to make the election closer than it would otherwise be. Sexism has long played a powerful role in influencing Americans' voting behavior and attitudes toward political issues. This is especially so today, given the high political importance of gender-related issues such as abortion, contraception and LGBTQ+ rights.

Our analysis shows that people with negative attitudes toward women are much less likely to support Harris for president. Whether the Harris campaign can successfully navigate this reality is still to be determined.

—The Conversation

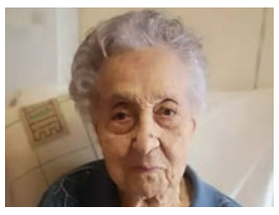


PHOTO: X/@TRIFFIC_STUFF_

World's oldest person Maria Branyas dies at 117

MADRID, 20 AUG

Maria Branyas, an American-born Spaniard considered the world's oldest person at 117 years old, has died, her family said on Tuesday. In a post on Branyas' X account, her family wrote in Catalan: "Maria Branyas has left us. She has gone the way she wanted: in her sleep, at peace, and without pain." The Gerontology Research Group, which validates details of people thought to be 110 or older, listed Branyas as the oldest known person in the world after the death of French nun Lucile Randon last year. Branyas was born in San Francisco on March 4, 1907, before her family returned to Spain when she was young. At the time of her death she was living in a nursing home in Catalan town of Olot. *—AP*

Heavy rains claim 19 lives in Pak's Balochistan

BALOCHISTAN, 20 AUG

As of Monday, ongoing monsoon rains have caused significant damage in Balochistan, resulting in at least 19 deaths and 11 injuries, and affecting over 3,000 individuals, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Dawn News reported. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), from 1 July to 17 August, rain-related incidents have resulted in 195 deaths and 362 injuries across the country, with 2,293 homes being damaged. Since 1 July, there have been 19 deaths, 11 injuries, and 3,031 people affected, with 433 houses either partially or fully destroyed. Baloch Deputy Commissioner Farida Tareen from Sohbatpur reported that the Judair River overflowed. *—ANI*

Charles III coin with British bees begins circulation

LONDON, 20 AUG

The first one pound coins featuring King Charles III with a design incorporating British bees have gone into circulation in the UK from Tuesday, with a total of 2.975 million coins making their way into tills via Post Offices and banks around the country. According to the Royal Mint, the tribute to British bees is one of eight new designs that will appear on the country's coins – in one pence to two pound denominations. . "The Royal Mint has made the circulating coinage of each of Britain's monarchs since Alfred the Great and it is an honour to reveal that King Charles III's one-pound coin is now in circulation," said Rebecca Morgan, Director of Commemorative Coin at the Royal Mint. *—AP*

SL sets spending limits for poll campaign for 1st time

COLOMBO, 20 AUG

For the first time, Sri Lanka's upcoming presidential election on 21 September will be subject to campaign finance regulations, following the introduction of the Regulation of Election Expenditure Act in January 2023. According to a gazette notification dated August 16 and published Monday, each candidate is allowed to spend a maximum of Rs 109 per elector for election campaigning activities, totalling Rs 1,868,298,586 (approx $ 5 million) per candidate. The expenditure limit per candidate has been set at 60 per cent of the total amount, while political party secretaries are allowed 40 per cent for their candidate's election campaign activities. The parties must submit expenditure reports to the Elections Commission within 21 days of the election results being declared, the notification stated. *—PTI*

Kamala will be a historic prez, says Biden

Taking a jibe at Trump, Biden says Trump will find out women's power in 2024 elections

President Biden wipes a tear with his daughter Ashley during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris appears during the first day of Democratic National Convention *PHOTOS: SCREENGRAB/ PTI*

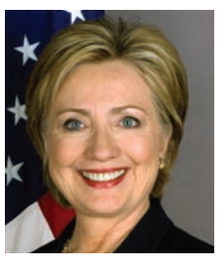
CHICAGO, 20 AUG

Kamala Harris will be a "historic president", US President Joe Biden has said, as he passed the baton of the Democratic Party to her and made a strong pitch to American voters to vote for her to preserve democracy.

Biden, 81, received an emotional standing ovation when he came on stage at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago on Monday night. Harris, 59, is scheduled to formally accept the Democratic Party's presidential nomination on Thursday to take on Republican rival Donald Trump. "Are you ready to elect Kamala Harris as the President of the United States of America," Biden said, amidst cheers from thousands of members and leaders of the Democratic Party at its national convention here in this windy city as he urged his countrymen to vote and elect his deputy of four years. He said Trump will find out women's power in 2024.

Harris will soon serve as the 47th President of the United States, Biden said, amidst cheers from thousands of members and leaders. *—AP*

> **Kamala has the character, experience, and vision to lead us forward. We both got our start as young lawyers helping children who were abused or neglected. That kind of work changes you.**
>
> —Hillary Clinton, former secretary of state



> **Kamala is inspiring a new generation. We are all a part of something bigger, we are stronger than we know the future of our country is in the hands of those here , and all of you want to get home.**
>
> —Jill Biden, First Lady

Trump posts AI fakes of Taylor supporting him

WASHINTON DC, 20 AUG

Trump posted the images, all of which appear to be AI-generated deepfakes taken from right-wing social media accounts with a history of sharing misinformation, along with a message saying "I accept!" One image showed smiling Swift fans, known as Swifties, wearing T-shirts with the text: "Swifties for Trump". *Courtesy. —Al Jazeera*

Musk open to cabinet role under Trump

NEW YORK, 20 AUG

Elon Musk *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk on Tuesday expressed his willingness to serve after Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump hinted that he will consider Elon Musk for cabinet role or advisory post if he wins.

"I am willing to serve," posted Musk on his 'X' platform after the Trump in a Reuters interview said that Musk will be welcome to become part of the US administration if the Republican candidate wins the US presidential election in November.

Trump in an interview to the news agency pointed out that if he returns to the White House, he would like to offer Musk, who is the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX a position as an advisor or cabinet member to the head of the US administration, if the entrepreneur is willing to engage in such activities. Asked if he would consider Musk for an advisory role or cabinet job, Trump told Reuters he would consider Musk for such a position "if he would do it,

Trump also told Reuters that if he is elected into office again as US President he would consider ending a USD7,500 tax credit for electric vehicle purchases. *—ANI*

US intel blames Iran for hacking

US intelligence officials said that Iran is responsible for the hack of Donald Trump's presidential campaign. The FBI said Iran was determined through the hacking operation to interfere in US politics and "to stoke discord and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions." *—AP*

Blinken says Israel agrees to US proposal for ceasefire

WASHINGTON, 20 AUG

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says that Israel has accepted a proposal to bridge differences holding up a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza. He called on Hamas to do the same.

Blinken on Tuesday was on his ninth urgent mission to the Middle East since the war in Gaza began more than 10 months ago. He did not say whether the "bridging proposal" addressed concerns cited by Hamas. Blinken spoke after holding a 2 1/2 hour meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier in the day, and will travel to Egypt and Qatar for further negotiations. The three mediators have spent months trying to end the war in Gaza, with the talks repeatedly stalling. "In a very constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu today, he confirmed to me that Israel supports the bridging proposal," Blinken told reporters, without saying what the proposal entails. "The next important step is for Hamas to say yes,' he said. *—AP*

Antony Blinken *PHOTO: PTI*

ISRAELI MILITARY SAYS IT RECOVERED BODIES OF 6 HOSTAGES

JERUSALEM, 20 AUG

The Israeli military said Tuesday that it recovered the bodies of six hostages taken in Hamas' 7 October attack that started the war in Gaza.

The recovery came as the United States, Egypt and Qatar are trying to mediate a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas that would see the release of scores of hostages held by the militant group. The military said in a statement that its forces recovered the bodies in an overnight operation in southern Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the recovery effort and said "our hearts ache for the terrible loss." *—AP*

Russian President Vladimir Putin with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, Azerbaijan on Monday *PHOTO: X*

Putin meets Azerbaijani Prez to strengthen ties

BAKU, 20 AUG

Russian leader Vladimir Putin held talks on Monday with his Azerbaijani counterpart as part of a two-day trip to secure Moscow's under-pressure trade routes and shore up ties in the South Caucasus.

Business links were high on the agenda as Putin and President Ilham Aliyev met in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, with Aliyev announcing that USD 120 million had been earmarked to boost cargo transport between the two countries.

"We're talking about the possibility of transporting 15 million tons of cargo per year or more," he said.

Such ties are increasingly a priority for Putin, who at this time depends on countries such as Azerbaijan to access global markets because of sanctions imposed on Moscow over Russia's war on Ukraine, said independent political scientist Zardusht Alizade. *—AP*

Russian attacks against Ukraine kill 5, injure 22

MOSCOW, 20 AUG

Russian attacks across Ukraine over the past day killed at least five civilians and injured at least 22, including a child, regional authorities said on Tuesday.

Ukrainian air defenses downed 25 of the 26 Shahed-type "kamikaze" drones launched by Russia overnight, as well as two Kh-59 cruise missiles and one Iskander-K cruise missile, the Air Force said. In Donetsk Oblast, five people were killed and eight injured in Russian attacks over the past day, according to Governor Vadym Filashkin.

The United States will continue to support Ukraine as its troops advance in Russia's Kursk Oblast, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said.

Ukraine has captured over 90 settlements in Kursk Oblast since launching its surprise cross-border offensive on 6 August.

Courtesy, Kyiv Independent

AMID CHINA TENSIONS

Indonesia and Australia finalise defence treaty

MELBOURNE, 20 AUG

Indonesia and Australia on Tuesday finalised a new bilateral defence treaty that will enhance the neighbouring nations' ability to operate their militaries in each other's territory.

The agreement was reached as Indonesian president-elect Prabowo Subianto, who also serves as defense minister, met with Australian officials at the country's Parliament earlier Tuesday. The bilateral relationship is becoming increasingly important to Australians in face of growing tensions with China. The pact will be signed within days, when Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles visits Jakarta.

The agreement will both the countries working together the global commons to support the rules-based order and, importantly, it will allow us to operate from each other's countries," Marles told reporters. *—AP*

Search on for missing 6 from yacht off Sicily

PORTICELLO, 20 AUG

Police divers resumed searching Tuesday for six people, including British tech magnate Mike Lynch, believed trapped some 50m underwater in the hull of a superyacht that sank in a storm off Sicily.

Divers in wetsuits and oxygen tanks returned to the site off Porticello, near Palermo, to tag-team in 12-minute underwater search shifts where the luxury sailboat went down. Fire rescue crews reported that divers only made it to the bridge during a first search, and were unable to access the below-deck cabins because they were blocked by furniture that had shifted during the violent storm that toppled the vessel early Monday.

The Bayesian, a 56m British-flagged luxury yacht, had been moored about a half-mile off Ponticello when a storm rolled in around 4am Monday. Also missing was Jonathan Bloomer, a chairman at Morgan Stanley International and the former head of the Autonomy audit committee who testified at Lynch's trial for the defense, and his wife. *—AP*

Scuba divers at the scene of the search for a missing boat, in Porticello, southern Italy, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Taiwan conducts fire missile drills amid China threats

JIUPENG, 20 AUG

Taiwan's military launched surface-to-air missiles in live-fire drills conducted Tuesday in response to growing military pressure from China.

The exercises took place at the Jiupeng Military Base in a remote area in southern Taiwan. Among the missiles launched were Taiwan's domestically made Sky Bow III anti-ballistic missiles along with the US-made Patriot PAC II and surface-to-air Standard missiles. *—AP*

BANGLADESH TURMOIL

Gunshots, airport chaos: Residents recall memories of unrest

DHAKA, 20 AUG

Software engineer Tawhidul Alam says the "historic day of 5 August " is indelibly seared in his memories -- the sea of humanity in the streets of Dhaka and a chain of events following unprecedented anti-government protests that have set Bangladesh's destiny on a course of change.

The Dhaka resident recalled the chaos that prevailed in the Bangladesh capital that day from main streets to the airport which was "closed for six hours". Mohd Shahid, who lives near Shaheed Minar -- a monument dedicated to the Bengali language movement in the country says, this monument site along with Shahbagh were the hotbeds of the recent anti-government protests.

A rickshaw-puller rides past a wall bearing graffiti themed on the recent anti-government protests, in Dhaka University *PHOTO: PTI*

"When police firing took place, I could hear it from my house, see several thousands of people in the streets," Md Mashrur, 21, said, he also wanted to go out and witness the protests, but "my parents did not allow me to venture out, owing to safety concerns". *—PTI*

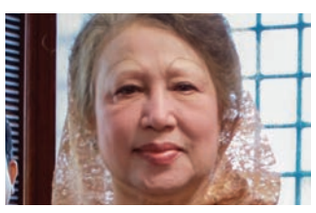
Hasina sued in 2 more murder cases

Two cases has been filed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 48 others in connection with the murder of Omar Faruk, a student of Kabi Nazrul College, and murder of Khalid Hasan Saifullah, student of Ideal College.

—Courtesy, Dhaka Tribune

ZIA'S BANK ACCOUNTS TO BE UNFROZEN

DHAKA, 20 AUG



Khaleda Zia *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Tax authorities in Bangladesh have decided to unfreeze the bank accounts of Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, 17 years after they were blocked.

In August 2007, the NBR's Central Intelligence Cell directed banks to freeze the accounts of the BNP Chairperson, who has been elected Bangladesh's prime minister twice since 1990.

The decision was based on a recommendation of a panel formed during the then Army-backed caretaker government, said a senior official of the NBR. Since then, her accounts have remained blocked. The BNP has on several occasions demanded that they be unfrozen. Later, she was allowed to withdraw a certain amount of money every month from Rupali Bank's Shaheed Moinul Road branch of Dhaka Cantonment for running regular expenses. The then caretaker government also blocked Sheikh Hasina's bank accounts but they were unfreezed after she became prime minister. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 8 paise to 83.79 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

The Indian rupee stayed firm for the second straight session and settled 8 paise higher at 83.79 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, buoyed by positive domestic equity markets, weak American currency and lower crude oil prices. Forex traders said, foreign fund outflow, however, resisted a sharp rise in the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.86 against the greenback and traded in the range of 83.76 to 83.88. The unit finally settled at 83.79 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 8 paise from its previous closing level. On Monday, the rupee settled 8 paise higher at 83.87 against the American currency. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee rose to the highest levels in nearly two and a half weeks on a weak US dollar and positive domestic markets. *—PTI*

Gold rallies ₹1,400 to ₹74,150 per 10 grams

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Gold prices saw the sharpest gain in the past one month and rallied by Rs 1,400 to touch Rs 74,150 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday, amid strong global cues. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session on Friday. Silver price also climbed by Rs 3,150 to Rs 87,150 per kilogram from Rs 84,000 per kg in the previous close. Gold prices recorded a steady fall after Union Finance Minister announced import duty cut on the metal in the annual budget for FY25. On July 23, the yellow metal had crashed Rs 3,350 to touch Rs 72,300 per 10 grams. Meanwhile gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity increased by Rs 1,400 each to Rs 74,150 and Rs 73,800 per 10 grams, respectively. Traders attributed the rise to increased demand from local jewellers and global trends. *—PTI*

Adani Port unveils advanced cargo handling system

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

Adani Krishnapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday unveiled an advanced cargo handling system, which will enhance its existing capacity and productivity, the company said. The new systems will streamline the management of both containerised and bulk cargo and are set to revolutionise cargo operations at the port and deliver efficiency and reliability, the private port operator said in a statement. The advanced cargo handling system uses advanced technology to boost efficiency and cargo throughput with key features such as automated tracking, real-time data analysis, and improved logistics coordination, enhancing speed, accuracy, safety, and reducing costs, it stated. "Adani Krishnapatnam port has enhanced infrastructure to increase the safety and sustainability and contribute to nation building. We offer substantial economic benefits to Indian importers combined with highly efficient port operations," the operator said. *—PTI*

Ashok Leyland aims single digit growth in MHCV segment

KOLKATA, 20 AUG

Leading vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland is aiming at single-digit growth in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle (MHCV) business in the current financial year, a senior company official said. President (MHCV), Ashok Leyland, Sanjeev Kumar said that the company has a market share of around 30 per cent in this segment and is the number two player in this category. "We are aiming at a single-digit growth in the MHCV category in the current financial year. With the economy picking up, we are expecting a robust commercial vehicle (CV) market", he said. Kumar said the east has been a key and focus market for Ashok Leyland. *—PTI*

Indian cos to spend $45-50B in capex over 1-2 years: Moody's

7 rated oil and gas cos to account for 30% of rated firm's capex

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday said rated Indian companies will spend USD 45-50 billion annually over the next 1-2 years towards capex as companies boost capacity, with the country's most valued firm Reliance Industries alone accounting for 30 per cent of the spendings.

Investments to increase vertical integration and achieve net zero targets will also keep spending high, Moody's Ratings said in a report on corporates in India and Indonesia.

"Rated Indian companies' capex will remain elevated at around USD 45-50 billion annually over the next one to two years. With an annual capex budget of around USD 15 billion spread across its different business segments, Reliance Industries alone will account for around 30 per cent of the portfolio capex," Moody's Ratings said.

The oil and gas sector and Reliance Industries will collectively account for over 60 per cent of the rated Indian portfolio's spending over the next couple of years.

Moody's said the seven rated oil and gas companies in India will also account for around 30 per cent of rated Indian companies' capex.

Moody's said credit quality will remain robust for companies in India and Indonesia *PHOTO: PTI*

These companies will spend around USD 15 billion annually to expand existing capacity and make green energy investments to reduce carbon transition risk.

For instance, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (Baa3 stable) and Indian Oil will spend USD 6 billion and USD 4 billion, respectively, in each of the next two years on reserves addition, downstream integration and energy transition, Moody's added.

It also said strong earnings will continue to keep the leverage of Indian corporates low, even as companies push ahead with capital spending plans in response to consumption growth and as offshore borrowing rates remain high.

> Moody's Ratings on Tuesday said rated Indian companies will spend USD 45-50 billion annually over the next 1-2 years towards capex as companies boost capacity, with the country's most valued firm Reliance Industries alone accounting for 30 per cent of the spendings.

Moody's said credit quality will remain robust for companies in India and Indonesia.

India and Indonesia are the two largest emerging market economies in Asia excluding China. These two G-20 countries have the highest number of rated companies and volume of rated debt among emerging economies in the region outside of China.

India's GDP is projected to grow at over 6 per cent over the next two years, Moody's said, adding domestic demand will be the main driving force behind India's growth. *—PTI*

NIFTY RISES BY 126 POINTS

Sensex rebounds 370 points; bank, finance stocks spurt

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty soared on Tuesday, propelled by robust buying in banking, financial and auto stocks amid a largely firm trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 378.18 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 80,802.86. During the day, the benchmark soared 518.28 points or 0.64 per cent to 80,942.96.

Rising for the fourth consecutive day, the NSE Nifty surged 126.20 points or 0.51 per cent to 24,698.85.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, NTPC, and Sun Pharma were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Adani Ports, JSW Steel and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled higher, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading with gains. The US markets ended in positive territory on Monday.

"Much of the strength and rally at Dalal Street is in the backdrop of steady SIP flows by retail investors. Global factors will be keenly watched as local investors would be eyeing the July FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting minutes to be released on Wednesday," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

PHOTO: PTI

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,667.46 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

However, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,802.92 crore.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.72 per cent to USD 77.10 a barrel. *—PTI*

BLOCK DEAL

Antfin Singapore Holding sells 2.1% stake in Zomato for ₹4K cr

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Antfin Singapore Holding on Tuesday divested a little over 2 per cent stake in online food delivery firm Zomato for Rs 4,771 crore through open market transactions.

Antfin Singapore Holding Pte is an arm of Ant Financial Group, while the latter is a part of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba.

According to the bulk deal data available on the BSE, Antfin Singapore Holding sold 18,54,40,550 shares in two tranches, amounting to a 2.1 per cent stake in Gurugram-based Zomato.

The shares were disposed of in the price range of Rs 257.17-257.46 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 4,771.66 crore.

PHOTO: PTI

After the share sale, Antfin Singapore Holding's stake has been reduced to 2.14 per cent from 4.24 per cent.

Details of buyers of Zomato's shares could not be ascertained.

Shares of Zomato rose 0.27 per cent to close at Rs 263 apiece on the BSE.

In March this year, Antfin Singapore Holding pared a 2 per cent stake in Zomato for Rs 2,827 crore.

Earlier this month, food delivery aggregator Zomato reported a multifold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 253 crore for the April-June quarter of 2024-25 compared to Rs 2 crore in the year-ago period.

The company's revenue from operations jumped more than 74 per cent to Rs 4,206 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal from Rs 2,416 crore in the April-June period of last year.

Its total expenses also rose to Rs 4,203 crore during the quarter under review, from Rs 2,612 crore a year ago. *—PTI*

JIOCINEMA-DISNEY TO BECOME INDIA'S LARGEST OTT?

In the biggest OTT platform merger, Mukesh Ambani's JioCinema is likely to merge with Disney Hotstar owned by Bob Iger to create a single platform

- The joint OTT will have 120 channels and 2 online streaming services.
- Reliance will invest ₹11,500 crore for the Joint Venture (JV), with Nita Ambani as the Chairperson
- Combined entity will be valued at ₹70,352 crore, with Reliance Group holding a 63% stake.
- Disney+ Hotstar is valued at ₹16,040 crore, while JioCinema is valued at ₹24,186 crore.
- Disney+ has 333 million active users worldwide
- Jio Cinema has an average of 225 million users each month
- Joint OTT subscribers is 750 million. JV to have exclusive rights to distribute Disney films and productions in India, with access to more than 30,000 Disney content assets.

- They will co-own the rights to the cricket segment, including IPL, and feature content from Disney, HBO, NBC Universal, and Paramount Global
- The rights will expire in 2027 and 2028, allowing the competitors to bid for the same

New directives to curb misuse through messaging

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

To ensure a clean and secure messaging ecosystem, safeguarding consumer interests and preventing fraudulent activities, regulator the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued directions to access service providers for enforcement.

Through a direction issued on Tuesday, the TRAI has mandated all access service providers to ensure a few guidelines. Lately, so-called promotional messages have to some extent taken the form of menace.

The regulator has mandated the access providers to migrate telemarketing calls starting with 140 series to the online DLT platform by September 30, 2024, for better monitoring and control.

Effective September 1, 2024, all access service providers will be prohibited from transmitting messages containing URLs, APKs, OTT links, or call-back numbers that are not whitelisted by the senders.

PHOTO: PTI

To enhance message traceability, TRAI has mandated that the trail of all messages from senders to recipients must be traceable from November 1, 2024. Any message with an undefined or mismatched telemarketer chain will be rejected.

To deter the misuse of templates for promotional content, TRAI has introduced punitive measures for non-compliance.

Content Templates registered under the wrong category will be blacklisted, and repeated offenses will lead to a one-month suspension of the sender's services. *—ANI*

Telecom sector soars in 2023-2024 with record subscription

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

The Indian telecom sector has achieved growth during the financial year 2023-2024, as revealed in the latest annual report released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

According to the Ministry of Telecommunications, the report underscores growth trends and key metrics across various telecom services, compiled from data provided by service providers. It reveals that India's overall teledensity rose from 84.51 per cent at the end of March 2023 to 85.69 per cent at the end of March 2024, marking an annual growth rate of 1.39 per cent.

The number of internet subscribers jumped from 88.1 crore at the end of March 2023 to 95.4 crore by March 2024, reflecting an 8.30 per cent annual growth rate and adding 7.3 crore new subscribers over the year.

PHOTO: ANI

> The Indian telecom sector has achieved growth during the financial year 2023-2024, as revealed in the latest annual report released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

Broadband services continued their upward trajectory, with subscribers increasing from 84.6 crore to 92.4 crore. This robust 9.15 per cent growth rate and the addition of 7.8 crore new broadband subscribers highlight the growing demand for high-speed connectivity.

The count of wireless data subscribers climbed from 84.6 crore in March 2023 to 91.3 crore in March 2024, a growth of 7.93 per cent. Additionally, the total volume of wireless data usage surged from 1,60,054 PB in 2022-23 to 1,94,774 PB in 2023-24, reflecting a 21.69 per cent annual increase.

The number of telephone subscribers rose from 117.2 crore to 119.9 crore, achieving a 2.30 per cent growth rate. The overall tele-density in India improved from 84.51 per cent to 85.69 per cent over the year, a 1.39 per cent increase. *—PTI*

Zara removes 'suggestive' kids' t-shirt after backlash

MADRID, 20 AUG

Zara, the Spanish retail clothing chain, recently faced backlash after a children's t-shirt sparked controversy for being "sexually suggestive." The issue arose when a woman shared a video of the white, crew-neck shirt, which featured black and red lettering. The front of the shirt read "The Perfect Snack" on the left side of the chest and "The Strawberry: A small burst of sweet joy" on the right.

The back of the t-shirt displayed two halves of a strawberry—one showing the inside of the fruit, the other the outside—along with the captions, "Take a bite. A burst of sweet delight, making it the perfect summer snack" and "The strawberry: a small burst of joy."

The term "snack" is often used to describe someone who is sexually attractive, adding to the controversy. *—Agencies*

ACROSS ALL MARKETS

Ikea India to scale up same-day delivery

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Swedish furniture retailer Ikea on Tuesday said it is piloting same-day delivery in Hyderabad and has plans to scale it up across all its markets in the coming year.

Besides, it has also achieved the milestone of 100 per cent deliveries through EV-powered vehicles across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune, as per its commitment for a sustainable value chain, said a statement from Ikea India.

The company also plans to achieve the same at its Mumbai operations, where it expects to reach carbon-free goal in a few months, it said.

Now Ikea as per its sustainability approach will enter all new markets, including Delhi-NCR where its next store is coming, with an EV-first approach, it added.

Ikea stores are operational in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai, and Bengaluru and two city stores in Mumba PHOTO: PTI

Currently, Ikea stores are operational in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai, and Bengaluru and two city stores in Mumbai.

Ikea India CEO Susanne Pulverer said: "For Ikea, a sustainable value chain is an essential part of our growth journey. This is just the first of the many milestones in that effort and we are proud to lead the EV journey from our foundational years in India. We strongly believe that profit and planet can be co-created and will continue to lead with this mindset."

Ikea India's transition to 100 per cent electric last-mile delivery began in 2019. Initially, the store deployed 3-wheeled tuk-tuks delivering thousands of orders a month. To accommodate larger furniture deliveries, the company also incorporated retrofit trucks into its operations and established in-house infrastructure for charging these electric vehicles. *—PTI*

Tata Chemicals raises ₹1K crore through NCDs

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Tata Chemicals has raised Rs 1,700 crore through the issue of Non-convertible Debentures (NCDs) to investors on a private placement basis.

In a regulatory filing on Tuesday, Tata Chemicals said an internal Committee, constituted by its board, has approved the allotment of 1,70,000 NCDs, having a face value Rs 1 lakh each for cash, aggregating to Rs 1,700 crore, for a tenor of 3 years, to identified investors on private placement basis.

The NCDs have a fixed rate coupon of 7.81 per cent and have been issued based on multiple yield allotment method. The NCDs will be listed on the Debt Segment of National Stock Exchange of India Limited. Recently, Tata Chemicals reported a 72 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 150 crore for the first quarter of this fiscal year on lower income and higher expenses. Net profit declined to Rs 175 crore from Rs 578 crore. Total income also declined to Rs 3,836 crore in the April-June period of 2024-25 from Rs 4,267 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: XXX

T-Series announces biopic of Yuvraj Singh

MUMBAI, 20 AUG

An upcoming biographical movie will chronicle the inspiring journey of former Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh, the makers announced Tuesday. The yet-to-be-titled biopic will be produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and co-produced by Ravi Bhagchandka, known for "Sachin: A Billion Dreams" and the upcoming Aamir Khan-starrer "Sitaare Zameen Par". The film is touted as a "grand celebration of Singh's unparalleled journey and contributions to cricket, capturing the essence of his career, unforgettable six sixes in the 2007 T20 World Cup, his courageous off-field battles and his subsequent return to cricket in 2012". Singh, who began his career at the age of 13, said he is hoping his life story will inspire people to overcome problems. *—PTI*

Punjab FC sign Argentine midfielder Ezequiel

MOHALI, 20 AUG

Indian Super League club Punjab Football Club on Tuesday announced the signing of Argentine midfielder Norberto Ezequiel Vidal as the fifth foreign signing for the 2024-25 season. The Argentine player last featured for Indonesian top-flight side Persita Tangerang. The 29-year-old was born in Bahia Blanca in Argentina and primarily plays as an attacking midfielder or a winger. He started his professional career in 2011 with Club Olimpo in his hometown. He spent eight years with the club and appeared 45 times, scoring on three occasions. He was loaned out to Atletico Independiente in Argentina, Delfin SC in Ecuador and Atletico Juventud in Uruguay. In 2019, he signed for Argentine Primera B side San Martin SJ and in the following year represented Atletico Alvarado, scoring five times. *—PTI*

Samoan batter sets new T20I record with 39-run over

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Samoa middle-order batter Darius Visser on Tuesday set a new world record for most runs in an over in T20Is, accumulating 39 against Vanuatu in the T20 World Cup East Asia-Pacific Region Qualifier in the capital city of Apia. Visser hammered pacer Nalin Nipiko for six sixes in an over that also included three no balls. The 28-year-old right-handed batter was playing in only his third T20I, and made 132 off 62 balls with five fours and 14 sixes. Previously, there were five occasions when a bowler conceded 36 runs in an over and they were Stuart Broad (2007), Akila Dananjaya (2021), Karim Jannat (2024), Kamran Khan (2024) and Azmatullah Omarzai (2024). *—PTI*

Ashmita, Malvika out of Japan Open badminton

YOKOHAMA, 20 AUG

Indian shuttlers Ashmita Chaliha and Malvika Bansod bowed out with opening-round losses in the women's singles competition of the Japan Open here on Tuesday. While Ashmita lost 16-21 12-21 to top seed Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, Malvika was shown the door by Ukraine Polina Buhrova 21-23 19-21. Later in the day, another Indian Aakarshi Kashyap will be up against Korea's Kim Ga Eun in her opening round match of the BWF World Tour Super 750 event. In mixed doubles, the Indian pair of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath will open its campaign against the Indonesian combination of Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati later in the day. None of the Indian shuttlers, who competed in the recent Paris Olympics, are playing in this event. *—PTI*

Sinner beats Tiafoe to clinch Cincinnati title

Sinner beats Tiafoe 7-6(4), 6-2 in final

MASON, 20 AUG

- Sinner and Tiafoe were both playing in their first Cincinnati finals with their previous best results being the third round

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner beat Frances Tiafoe in straight sets in the Cincinnati Open final to claim his fifth title of the season.

Sinner, who turned 23 on Friday, beat American Frances Tiafoe 7-6(4) 6-2 to become the youngest Cincinnati champion since 21-year-old Andy Murray won in 2008. "I'm just trying to keep going this way mentally. It's important to recover to be ready for New York. That's the most important thing. I'm very happy to be in the position where I am," Sinner said.

The US Open begins on 26 August in New York.

Sinner and Tiafoe were both playing in their first Cincinnati finals with their previous best results being the third round. Tiafoe forced a tiebreak in the first set, but three straight errors led to a 7-6 defeat.

Sinner had a 5-1 lead in the second before Tiafoe saved three match points to make it 5-2 before Sinner was able to serve out for the win. Tiafoe had a less conventional path to the final. He won the first set in the quarterfinals on Saturday before Hubert Hurkacz retired with a calf injury then saved two match points to defeat Holger Rune in three sets in the semis. An American man hasn't won the title in Cincinnati since Andy Roddick in 2006. *—AP*

MATCH STAT

SINNER		TIAFOE
13	ACES	5
2	DOUBLE FAULTS	2
59%	FIRST SERVE %	60%
85%	WIN % ON 1ST SERVE	68%
82%	WIN % ON 2ND SERVE	50%

Sabalenka wins first title since AO

Sabalenka defeats Jessica Pegula 6-3, 7-5

MASON, 20 AUG

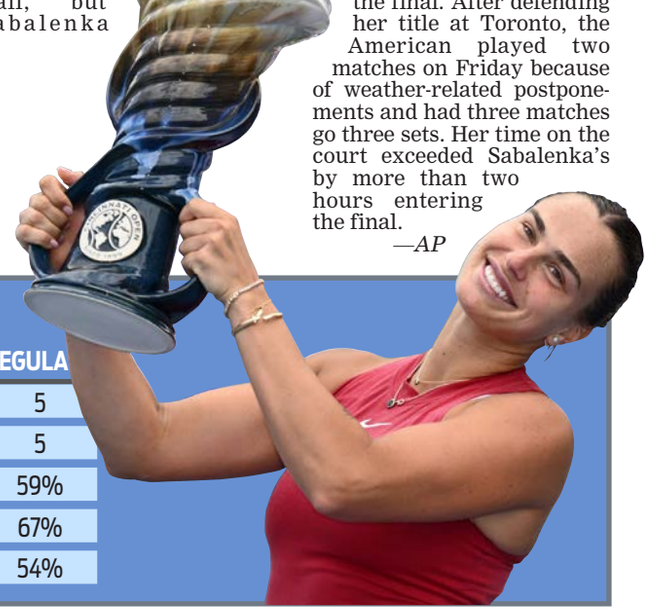
- Sabalenka on Monday defeated Jessica Pegula 6-3, 7-5 for her first title since the Australian Open

Women's No. 2 Ayrna Sabalenka earned straight-set victories in the finals of the Cincinnati Open, the first title at the tournament for her.

Sabalenka on Monday defeated Jessica Pegula 6-3, 7-5 for her first title since the Australian Open in January. Sabalenka moved up a spot to No. 2 in the rankings before the match, then didn't lose a set en route to her 15th WTA title. She had never gotten past the semifinals at Cincinnati, losing three times in that round.

The Belarusian missed Wimbledon with a shoulder injury, then returned to the tour at Washington two weeks ago. "I would say that I'm really playing great tennis," Sabalenka said. Against Pegula, Sabalenka took 17 minutes to build a 4-1 lead in the first set. Pegula, who double-faulted five times, broke serve for the first time to tie the second set at 5-all, but Sabalenka won the next two games to finish off the 1-hour, 14-minute match.

The sixth-ranked Pegula had a challenging road to the final. After defending her title at Toronto, the American played two matches on Friday because of weather-related postponements and had three matches go three sets. Her time on the court exceeded Sabalenka's by more than two hours entering the final. *—AP*



MATCH STAT

SABALENKA		PEGULA
10	ACES	5
1	DOUBLE FAULTS	5
67%	FIRST SERVE %	59%
91 %	WIN % ON 1ST SERVE	67%
69%	WIN % ON 2ND SERVE	54%

India need to hone finishing skills after Bhutan triumph: Head coach

KATHMANDU, 20 AUG

Coming off a fighting 1-0 win over Bhutan, the Indian team will need to work on its finishing in the upcoming matches of the SAFF U20 Championship, head coach Ranjan Chaudhuri reckoned on Tuesday.

Having beaten their Himalayan neighbours 1-0 in their opening match, India have provisionally taken the top spot in Group B with three points.

While Chaudhuri was full of praise for his boys who managed to hold on to the lead against Bhutan despite being down to nine men, he also pointed out how India still need to improve while going forward.

"The way our boys fought after the two red cards is indeed commendable. It's not easy to set a stable formation with nine players, but they managed to hold fort. It speaks a great deal about their character," said Chaudhuri.

With a three-day gap before their next match against Maldives on August 23, the Blue Colts could manage to squeeze some rest and recovery into their packed schedule. Chaudhuri said, "We are playing on artificial turfs, which do tend to take a toll on the body, so we have planned to have a recovery session today (Tuesday, August 20). We had initially planned for a pool session, but the rain and the relatively cooler weather here in Nepal made us reconsider those plans. Hence we went ahead with light stretching.

"We plan to put in two productive training sessions in the next couple of days before we play Maldives."

With three points on board, the India U20s will have one eye on the next Group B match between Bhutan and Maldives on Wednesday, where a victory for the latter would secure a spot in the semi-finals for the Blue Colts.

Midfielder Manjot Singh Dhami was in agreement with his coach, and felt that the team could only improve from here on. *—PTI*

Atletico draw 2-2 with Villarreal

MADRID, 20 AUG

Villarreal and Atletico Madrid combined for four goals in an action-packed first half but neither side could find a winner in the second as they settled for a 2-2 draw in their Spanish league opener.

A new-look Atletico team was without Stefan Savic, Mario Hermoso, Memphis Depay and Álvaro Morata and went behind after 18 minutes on Monday when Arnaut Danjuma scored a solo goal from a tight angle.

Marcos Llorente leveled the scores for Atletico two minutes later with a fierce strike only for Villerreal to get back in front nine minutes before half-time thanks to a goalkeeping mistake by keeper Jan Oblak.

Oblak flapped at a cross and the ball hit the unsuspecting Koke and bounced into the net for an own goal.

Joao Felix was not in the Atletico squad amid reports that he is on the verge of joining Chelsea.

Valladolid beats fellow newcomer Espanyol. *—AP*

Bumrah has been best multi-format bowler for last 5-6 years: Ponting

DUBAI, 20 AUG

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been the best multi-format bowler for the last five or six years, reckons former Australia captain Ricky Ponting.

Ponting said that there might have been a few concerns over Bumrah's longevity but he has only returned stronger from injuries. "I've said it for a long time, he's probably been the best multi-format bowler there's been in world cricket for the last five or six years," Ponting said on the ICC review.

"There might have been some fears a couple of years ago when the injuries come in and 'would he come back the same?', but I think he's actually come back better," he added. "The greatest way to always get a real gauge on these players is by asking (other) players. And when you talk to opposition batsmen about him (Bumrah) in particular, it's always, 'No, he's a nightmare! You never know what's going to happen.

"One's going to swing, one's going to seam, he's going to bowl an in-swinger, he's going to bowl an out-swinger," he continued. With 15 wickets in the T20 World Cup, Bumrah played a pivotal role in India's title triumph and Ponting heaped praise on the 30-year-old. *—PTI*

Messi left out of Arg's WC qualifiers squad

BUENOS AIRES, 20 AUG

Lionel Messi will not play in Argentina's next two World Cup qualifiers because of injury.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni announced his 28-man squad on Monday for the matches against Chile on 5 September and Colombia five days later.

Messi is still recovering from a right ankle injury.

The 36-year-old Ángel Di María, who retired from the national team after winning the recent Copa America, is not on the list either.

World Cup champion Argentina leads South American qualifying with 15 points after six matches. *—AP*

SQUAD

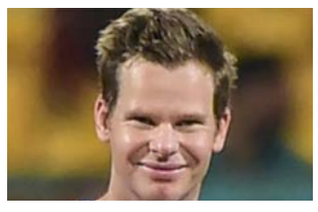
GOALKEEPERS: Walter Benítez (PSV Eindhoven), Gerónimo Rulli (Olympique Marseille), Juan Musso (Atalanta), Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa).

DEFENDERS: Gonzalo Montiel (Sevilla), Nahuel Molina (Atletico Madrid), Cristian Romero (Tottenham), Germán Pezzella (River Plate), Leonardo Balerdi (Olympique Marseille), Nicolás Otamendi (Benfica), Lisandro Martínez (Manchester United), Nicolás Tagliafico (Olympique Lyon), Valentín Barco (Brighton).

MIDFIELDERS: Leandro Paredes (Roma), Guido Rodríguez (West Ham), Alexis Mac Allister (Liverpool), Enzo Fernández (Chelsea), Giovani Lo Celso (Tottenham), Ezequiel Fernández (Al Qadisiya), Rodrigo de Paul (Atletico Madrid), Nico González (Fiorentina).

PHOTO: X

SMITH HINTS AT PLAYING T20I AT LA28 OLYMPICS



Steve Smith PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

Australia batter Steven Smith has not ruled out the possibility of making an appearance in the LA 2028 Paris Olympics.

Smith, 35, hasn't dropped any hint about his retirement plans. With the T20 format set to be played at the LA 28 Olympics, Smith sees himself playing the shortest format of cricket in the next four years.

"I could still be playing T20 cricket in four years, so you never know. It's a format I can see myself playing probably for a lot longer than some of the others, especially with the franchise stuff around the world. I've signed on here for three years so it's only another year after that. It would be cool to be part of an Olympics," Smith said as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

Smith signed a three-year contract with the Big Bash League franchise Sydney Sixers. *—ANI*

'NOT FEASIBLE'

Women's T20 WC shifted from Bangladesh to UAE

DUBAI, 20 AUG

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday moved the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup from Bangladesh to the UAE, saying it "wasn't feasible" to conduct the event there after governments of a number of participating countries advised against travelling to the unrest-hit nation.

The event, which also features India and is scheduled to take place from October 3 to 20, will now be staged in Dubai and Sharjah with Bangladesh retaining the hosting rights, ensuring that it receives its share of revenue.

"It is a shame not to be hosting the Women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh as we know the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) would have staged a memorable event," ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said in a statement which avoided any direct mention of the violence and tension in the South Asian nation.

Allardice said the BCB explored "all avenues to try and enable the event to be hosted" there.

"...but travel advisories from the governments of a number of the participating teams meant that wasn't feasible. However, they will retain hosting rights. We look forward to taking an ICC global event to Bangladesh in the near future," he said.

Over 230 people have been killed in incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the massive protest by students against a quota system in government jobs first started in mid-July. *—PTI*

IOC fillip for ESports

NEW DELHI, 20 AUG

In a move aimed at promoting ESports globally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has entered into a partnership with the National Olympic Committee of Saudi Arabia to host the inaugural edition of Olympic ESports Games. This comes after the Olympics Executive Board proposed the creation of the ESports Games. Abhishek Issar, Founder, UNIV Sportatech and Founding Member, FEAI said, "Today, every country will look at ESports as an Olympic medal winning opportunity."*—PTI*

SINQUEFIELD CUP

Gukesh draws against Liren

ST LOUIS, 20 AUG

India's chess star D Gukesh played out a draw against the reigning world champion Ding Liren in the first round of the Sinquefield Cup in St Louis.

In what turned out to be a preview of their upcoming battle in the World Chess Championship, Gukesh and Ding squared off against each other in a classical round.

This was their first encounter since Gukesh won the 2024 Candidates Tournament. In the world rankings, Gukesh is currently at number six, while Ding is 15th, his lowest world ranking.

In an encounter that saw a couple of nervy moments, Gukesh, who had black pieces, managed to escape a tricky situation. The Indian survived a scare after he pushed his pawn to the d4 square, but Ding failed to punish him. Ding played bishop d3, which allowed Gukesh to escape from a peculiar position.

D Gukesh PHOTO: X

The next moves by both players saw plenty of pieces leave the board and end the affair in a draw.

Challenger Gukesh and Ding will face each other again in the FIDE World Championship Match 2024, which will be held between 20 November and 15 December this year in Singapore.

FIDE had received three competitive applications for hosting the World Championship Match - from New Delhi (India), Chennai (India), and Singapore.

"After reviewing the bids and inspecting all potential host cities for their venues, amenities, event programs, and opportunities, the International Chess Federation has selected Singapore as the host of the World Championship Match," FIDE said in an official statement last month. *—ANI*